

Development from 6A

you have seen that there are a whole lot of things going on in town, and some great ideas being planned," Henry said.

Zahas, who, with Leland Consulting Group and Murray, Smith and Associates Civil Engineering, presented at the meeting, said, "We looked at Florence's assets and strengths we can play off toward the goal of economic opportunity and development in the Urban Renewal District and the Old Town area. Tonight, we are translating those ideas into opportunities."

The consulting groups wanted to focus on housing, employment and other revitalization goals by looking at businesses, culture, the Siuslaw Public Library, Florence City Hall, parks, public art and open spaces.

"We work in communities of all sizes and we usually see half the turnout in cities twice as big," Zahas said of the 150 people who attended. "It's a testament to your commitment to your city and what you see as the potential for Florence."

Throughout 2016, city staff, councilors, committee members and the community worked to market Florence, develop a public art plan, maintain and improve parks and streets and begin pursuing a Coast Guard City designation.

Florence was also named the "most beautiful town" in America by Expedia.

In June, Lane County presented the Rural Prosperity Initiative, a program that will offer a coordinated support system that draws on local expertise, builds capacity and caters to the individual needs of rural communities. Lane County also budgeted for a county economic development liaison dedicated specifically to rural areas.

"We came to the conclusion that successful economic development emphasizes community development, capacity building and collaboration," Hatfield Fellow Aniko Drlik-Muehleck said. "Economic development is not a standalone thing. It requires an entire community."

Florence's partners have been LCC and its Small Business Development Center, South Coast Development Council, Florence Area Chamber of Commerce, RAIN, Lane Council of Governments, Travel Lane County, Oregon Department of Transportation and more.

Florence City Councilor Joshua Greene said, "I'm just happy to hear that the county realizes the asset that we have to offer and the fact that we can help each other."

That July, after Florence wrapped up the 109th annual Rhody Days and the annual Fourth of July celebration, both chamber events, new Chamber Executive Director Bettina

Hannigan addressed Florence City Council. In 2015-16, the chamber brought in \$2.3 million at its various events.

"Stable economic development, tourism, education and community all play a signature part of the chamber's overall focus," Hannigan said. "We can all agree that we want to see a city that brings opportunities for our families and our children."

In August, State Sen. Arnie Roblan and State Rep. Caddie McKeown held their fifth annual Oregon Coastal Caucus Economic Summit in North Bend. The main takeaway for the Florence City Council was about housing and economic development, issues that affect much of Oregon's coastal properties.

"Right now, the housing market is tight in Florence," Henry said. "There's a major demand that's almost crisis proportion. And that's both coast-wide and all over the state of Oregon."

After a conversation with Siuslaw Outreach Services' Bob Teter, Henry said, "Up and down the coast, we're trying to get employers and help schools develop qualified trained workers. One of the obstacles we keep running into is, if we keep bringing these people into town, where are they going to live?"

Reynolds said looking at Florence's city services may provide part of an answer.

"We're in the business of providing a chance for businesses to thrive and grow here," she said. "We're committed to having a great street infrastructure system, providing a good quality of life for our people and being where people want to live and work. More importantly to economic development, we are committed to being a place you want to have your business. Whether it grows, stays or adds employees, we hope it brings new money into our community and increases the quality of life for everyone."

The caucus also allowed Florence a moment to shine as Henry introduced the panel: "Small Town, Big Ideas: The Role of Eco Tourism, Innovation and Entrepreneurship."

"The panel talked about Florence — and our small communities on the coast — and some of the small successes that we've had with economic development and tourism," Henry said.

RAIN's Cummings also presented during the panel.

"I had the opportunity to speak about our successes and how Florence has stepped up to be the first rural coastal community to implement a formal entrepreneurial partnership with RAIN," she said.

RAIN sealed the partnership Nov. 1, 2016, with the hiring of David Youngentob as the coastal venture catalyst to work with Florence and Lincoln County startups. He had previously worked with rural communities

"Is Coastal Living in Jeopardy?"

This series covers the current housing and employment crisis facing the Siuslaw region. Through in-depth interviews with government officials, volunteer organizations, property managers and employers, the series examines the problems facing the region, the solutions that the community is working on and what the community can do to help.

The series is available online at thesiuslawnews.com, or in print by request.

Series List

Nov. 15: SOS

Nov. 22: State of housing

Nov. 29: How we got here

Dec. 6: Time to step up

Dec. 13: Volunteer economy

Dec. 27: Jobs and workforce

Jan. 3: Economic Development

This exploration of the Siuslaw region will include education on Jan. 3 and conclude on Jan. 17.

and entrepreneur support groups, as well as being an entrepreneur who started his own traded-sector bio-science company.

"We decided that the coastal market needs a rigorous program. David will be looking at revamping our pre-accelerator course since there are differing needs on the coast," Cummings said. "The intention is that entrepreneurs will feel certain they have a market for their product — and possibly even be selling by the time the course is complete."

On Oct. 24, Oregon Economic Development Association awarded RAIN the Outstanding Collaborative Award in recognition of the work done to fuel the region's economy through an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Also in November, Florence selected entrepreneur Jesse Dolin as the city's economic development catalyst to focus on Florence's 1,500 businesses and use staff time to pursue partnerships, grants and support economic development efforts.

"To have someone who can always say this is their priority — growth of our community — that's an amazing thing that the Florence City Council decided to fund," Reynolds said.

Dolin said, "I believe in connecting people to make things happen. ... So much comes from collaboration and partnerships. It's amazing what can happen when everyone rallies together to go after mutually beneficial game plans."

Florence wrapped up 2016 with a council retreat.

Henry said, "A summary of the results achieved in 2016 reflected 155 action items in the work plan, with 101 of those marked 'completed.' ... Florence truly is a 'City in Motion' and the momentum created by an outstanding 2016 will carry the city forward into 2017 and beyond."

2017 — "THAT IS THE FUTURE"

Momentum continued into 2017 as FURA began finalizing plans for ReVision Florence with the city and ODOT.

"We want cars to slow down and people to say, 'Hey, look at

this wonderful little town,'" Drive, between Ninth and Hemlock streets, to mark two six-foot bike lanes.

In March, FURA and Florence City Council voted to continue to pursue ReVision Florence, even after the project's totals reached \$7.4 million.

FURA Director Mike Webb said, "I moved to Florence in 1988. (ODOT) had just widened Highway 101 north of Highway 126. A lot of things changed after that. The investment was made and it dramatically changed the town. Sometimes you have an opportunity to do something."

FURA Director Patricia Riley added, "If we do this right, the long-term benefits will be huge. This is the kind of thing that (urban renewal) investment dollars should be spent on."

March also saw the visit of Oregon Gov. Kate Brown to Florence. More than 35 people, representatives from Port of Siuslaw, City of Florence, Florence Area Chamber of Commerce, RAIN, and Florence Regional Arts Alliance (FRAA) joined Brown to hear about the area's economic vitality and recent efforts to increase development, create partnerships with regional organizations, improve infrastructure and more.

Reynolds said, "We have found a lot of our city projects end up being 18 to 24 months long. We have been administering and planning for that long. Administratively, it feels like we are doing it already."

On Feb. 6, Florence City Council approved its latest City Work Plan to include elements of the new biannual budget cycles.

Reynolds described the document as "robust" and said it showed validation for the city's work plan objectives.

"With that, we are always in motion, and we're always thinking of how to be better and work faster or be more efficient," Reynolds said.

Councilor Susy Lacer, "We have a lot of disruptions going on around our city — bumpy roads, construction, detours and a fair number of inconveniences — but that's what happens when you are 'A City in Motion' with our goals and very ambitious work plan. These are temporary disruptions on the road to becoming the kind of community that we all want it to be."

For Lacer, those disruptions were part of the progress the city underwent, including improved water flow thanks to work done by Florence Public Works and new paint on Rhododendron

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innovators, and you are so right. I can't do this alone. Mayor Joe can't do this on his own. ... This is definitely a team effort."

She added, "I'm falling in love with this little town. We just really appreciate everything you're doing to move this city and the region forward. ... I look forward to working with you as we make this region a place where everyone can thrive and open the doors of opportunity."

Last May, Florence Economic Development Catalyst Dolin reported that the city has started to see fruit from a long period of sowing into new and expanding businesses.

"Florence really does care about this community," he said. "This is a unique town, where everyone feels connected and wants to be a part of the city being as vibrant as possible. It is a place where a healthy business and a healthy lifestyle can go hand in hand."

Between 2016-17, three businesses purchased lots at Pacific View Business Park. Top Hydraulics, owned by Klaus and Maria Witte, was the first.

"This business is going to provide jobs for the community and provide more of a tax base to improve the city," Maria said. "We are moving forward in a way that is responsible to the community, the city and the land, and also to encourage growth here."

According to Klaus, everyone, from the Florence Planning Department to area contractors, made the experience a good move for his business, which rebuilds hydraulic parts for more than 30 brands of modern convertible vehicles. It is a niche market located in Florence that ships all over the world.

Maria said, "You see construction going on around town. It's not just road construction, but buildings and things happening and new business. It's exciting, this momentum."

In June, RAIN held a showcase for its 11 Coastal Pre-Accelerator startups from Lane and Lincoln counties. Pre-Accelerators began in March in Florence and Lincoln City, with six entrepreneurs attending the Florence group and five attending Lincoln City. Each cohort covered a range of topics including marketing and sales, financials and business modeling, and pitching and fundraising. They addressed these topics through seminars and workshops, group and one-on-one mentoring, one-page business plans and more.

Coastal Venture Catalyst Youngentob said, "RAIN helps startup ventures that are being founded here on the coast launch and grow their businesses faster so they can reach customers all over country, and potentially the world. With our partners, we've been administering a three-month boot camp for startup founders. These people are your neighbors that you probably already know. These are folks that are trying to launch a company from scratch."

On July 10, City of Florence signed official intergovernmental agreements (IGA) with ODOT and FURA for ReVision Florence. It is the first time ODOT has recognized an urban renewal agency with an IGA.

"What we're pulling off with this ReVision involves a lot of moving parts, a lot of partnerships and something new," said Greene. "What we are doing as a community is something that has not been done in the state in the way that we're doing it. A lot of eyeballs are watching, some hopeful and some tentative. This is really a methodology that other small, rural communities can embrace in the future."

Reynolds agreed, saying, "It is very exciting to be making history with ODOT."

In August, Florence became the 24th Coast Guard City in America.

U.S. Coast Guard 13th District Commander Rear Admiral David Throop presided. He said, "It is great to be here to honor the City of Florence, which has had a 100-year relationship with your U.S. Coast Guard. I knew I was coming into a special place when I saw those American flags flying. It has continued to get more special every passing minute as I spent a little more time here and had the chance to meet some of you."

COAST RADIO OUR TOWN

WEDNESDAY - January 3 from 4-6pm on KCST 106.9 fm
Rebroadcast - January 4 from 10-Noon on KCFM 104.1 fm / 1250 am

THIS MONTH ON OUR TOWN:

Former OCHS Board Member **ATTY. Scott Bailey** and Volunteer **Jack Hannigan** - Oregon Coast Humane Society

Florence Police Chief **Tom Turner** and Sgt. **Brandon Ott** - Drug Issues in Florence

Meg Spencer - rivercal.org

The Winter Music Festival

Lori Severance - Chaplaincy Program with SVFR

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